

# NEW ZEALAND LIBRARIES

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## HISTORICAL ATLAS MATERIAL

### ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY

At the time of New Zealand's centennial celebrations, when many New Zealanders became aware for the first time that their country had a past, a branch of the Internal Affairs Department was established to meet the popular interest in our national history. The *Making New Zealand* series was produced; the *Centennial Surveys* were commissioned; the *Historical Atlas* was projected.

The Atlas was to show, by maps, the development of New Zealand from 1350 to the present day. It would show at a glance where, for instance, the Maori tribal migrations took place, how the Maori and European population was distributed at various dates, the number and

location of dairy factories in the early days of the industry and at present, and a hundred other things that can be made vivid by visual representation but which, presented as facts and figures, are not meaningful to the average mind. Accompanying each map was to be a brief letterpress, explaining obscure or controversial points, but, essentially, the maps would be comprehensible without any text.

Once work started it was realised that very often material on which maps could be directly based did not exist, or was not reliable. The Atlas could not be produced as rapidly as had been planned, for research had to be undertaken in fields previously untouched by the historian. It was hard, but interesting and, at times, even exciting work, and those employed were for the most part young and enthusiastic. When war interrupted the programme, staff had to be transferred to more urgent work, but with peace came a fresh impetus to research and redrafting of maps. Although there were many staff changes, the careful documenting of pieces of research, the advice and information that former members of the branch were always ready to give, and the detailed knowledge of every aspect of the project of the secretary, Robert Burnett, meant that comparatively little was lost by these changes.

A review of the project, in 1950-52, showed that completion on the original basis was some distance away, and likely to be costly. The Government therefore decided to produce a general New Zealand Atlas in place of the historical one, and this is actively in preparation by the Department of Lands and Survey. At this point (1956) some maps have been printed. The Historical Branch ceased to exist with the transfer of its last member to the Alexander Turnbull Library, whither anon the Atlas material itself followed. In all, about 40 years of research, done by various people, is contained in this collection of draft maps, files and notes. In many ways it is to be regretted that the original plan was abandoned, for it is undoubted that much valuable material will now be limited in availability.

There are a few fine drafts of maps and a number of completed texts, but the rest of the material consists of rough draft maps and a mass of notes, summaries and correspondence. The form and amount of the material that remains in each section depends not only on how much research it had been necessary to do, but also on the manner in which the research assistant worked. Some engaged in much correspondence and submitted maps for comment to authorities throughout the country, so that valuable material accumulated on the file; some rewrote their notes in long summaries and placed those on the file; others, still, left shoe-boxes full of their original notes, and so on.

The problems confronting the Alexander Turnbull Library were, firstly, where to store the material, and, secondly, what use to make of it. Published maps and charts, many of them photostats from overseas, which had been used in compiling Atlas maps, were trans-

ferred to the Library's map collection together with a card index of all maps and charts of New Zealand from Tasman to the *Acheron-Pandora* charts of 1849-54. The present unsatisfactory position of the rest of the material is that a map cabinet, and a set of pigeon holes containing rolled maps, share space in a storeroom belonging to the Maori Affairs Department, in Bowen House, while the written material is housed in cardboard boxes in the Manuscript Room of the temporary quarters of the Library, in Courtenay Place.

Perhaps it would be as well here to give a more exact account of what this material comprises. The divisions originally envisaged for the Atlas were: Contemporary, Physical, Economic, Maori, Discovery and Exploration, and Settlement. The fine draft maps of the first three sections have been borrowed by the committee compiling the New Zealand Atlas which will draw upon the material in them.

In the Maori section, most of the maps and the research done for them are incomplete. Nevertheless, the material on such topics as canoe areas and Maori tracks and waterways was corrected by Sir Apirana Ngata, Pei te Hurunui Jones and other Maori authorities, and is more reliable and detailed than anything else that is available.

In the Discovery and Exploration section, the maps showing the tracks of Pacific explorers from Magellan to Cook, and of post-Cook navigators about New Zealand who charted portions of the coast, required redrafting. The tracks of Antarctic explorers had been drafted only on many sheets of codatrace. The notes in this section include corrections for the present showings, and the sources used.

The maps of the last section, Settlement, are in varying stages of completion, but the letterpress, summaries and notes relating to all parts (Missionary activity pre-1845, Whaling, sealing and settlement pre-1840, the New Zealand Company settlements at Wellington, Manawatu, Wanganui, New Plymouth and Otago, Inland exploration, Provincial boundaries 1848-76 and county boundaries 1876, Land purchase and acquisition at 1850, 1860, 1890, 1910 and 1939, and European population at 1851, 1886, and 1911) contain a tremendous amount of material which the student will not find elsewhere unless he does the same research over again.

Up to the present, the material has been used by students writing theses in history, geography and anthropology; by the research assistants of the Auckland Provincial History; by people engaged on other pieces of historical writing, including former members of the Historical Branch; and by the reference staff of the Library. It is difficult to see how it could be used for quick reference, for it takes some time to find one's way among the inadequately labelled maps, to distinguish between earlier and later drafts, to relate the maps to the written material. But even if it can now be used only by the few, there remain the problems of preservation and indexing. It is clear enough that a file which is handled perhaps once a month will fall apart in due course—particularly if bulky—and so it is planned to retype



some of those most frequently used. This is no small undertaking, for the pre-1840 settlement summaries alone run into over 500 single-spaced foolscap pages of typing. As for indexing, the most practicable suggestion so far has been to place guide cards for particular subjects, individuals, places etc., in our main catalogue, reference index and index to New Zealand biographies. Proper treatment of this kind will necessitate special staff for some time and, upon the return to Bowen Street, it is expected this can be arranged.

This article was originally prepared as one of a series of staff talks given in the Alexander Turnbull Library, and it is reprinted here to give some general information for scholars proposing to consult this important material. Any suggestions for its fuller utilisation will be welcomed by the library.

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## THE COUNTRY RESIDENT AND THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

*(Reprinted from the Library Record of Australasia)*

*It is now 60 years since the Library Association of Australasia was first established. This article, taken from an early issue of the Association's official journal, invites comparisons of Australian problems with those that have had to be faced here in organising library service for a widely scattered population. It also provides some form of yardstick by which to measure the degree of success achieved in dealing with these problems.*

It is not an uncommon thing to hear the person who resides in the country complain that, owing to the necessity he is under of living so far from the metropolis, he is deprived of many advantages which the city resident enjoys. He finds that even the railway authorities offer more inducements for people to make trips into the country than they do for country people to visit the city. He laments his position when reading the newspaper account of a specially brilliant Shakespearian performance at the theatre, of the arrival of a famous opera troupe, or of a lecture by a celebrated man on a topic in which he is specially interested. But if he is a student, or has literary tastes, his inability to make use of the National Library is the greatest disadvantage he feels, for he so frequently requires its assistance.

The National Librarian's sympathies are always with those who are anxious to use the treasures he conserves, but who are unable to do so owing to circumstances which he cannot alter. Mr Anderson, of New South Wales, has on more than one occasion spoken and